



**Livestock and Seed Program  
Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch  
Quality System Audit Report**

**AUDIT INFORMATION**

<b>Applicant Name:</b>	Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA)
<b>Est. Number:</b>	N/A
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<b>Contact &amp; Title:</b>	Stephen F. Sears, Certification Administrator
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	<a href="mailto:organic@oeffa.com">organic@oeffa.com</a>
<b>Phone Number:</b>	419-853-4060
<b>Auditor(s):</b>	Steve Ross, Lead Auditor & Phil Frederick, Observer
<b>Program:</b>	USDA National Organic Program (NOP)
<b>Audit Date(s):</b>	February 2 - May 3, 2007
<b>Audit Identifier:</b>	NP7033DDB
<b>Action Required:</b>	Yes
<b>Audit Type:</b>	Surveillance - Accreditation Renewal Audit
<b>Audit Objective:</b>	To verify continuing compliance to the audit criteria; and to verify the implementation and effectiveness of corrective actions in addressing the previous non-compliances
<b>Audit Criteria:</b>	7 CFR Part 205, National Organic Program, Final Rule, dated December 21, 2000; Updated September 11, 2006
<b>Audit Scope:</b>	OEFFA's quality manual dated October 2006 including personnel, processes, procedures, facilities, and related records.
<b>Location(s) Audited:</b>	OEFFA office in West Salem, OH; Jim Gasser Farm in Sterling, OH; Killbuck Valley Mushrooms in Burbank, OH; Biery Cheese in Louisville, OH; and Mark Good Farm in Dalton, OH

The OEFFA Organic Certification Program has been established since the 1990's and was accredited as a certifying agent on April 29, 2002, to the National Organic Program (NOP) for crops, wild crops, livestock, and handling operations. Currently, OEFFA has 412 clients that are inspected and approved with 312 crops, 3 wild crops, 189 livestock (of which these are all crops also), and 39 handlers/processors certified to the NOP Standard. The number of clients has grown rapidly in the past two years due to many Amish dairy farmers joining in the organic program.

The 5 Year Accreditation Audit process started on February 2, 2007 with a review of the documents submitted by OEFFA and concluded with the on-site surveillance audit which was conducted on April 30 – May 3, 2007.



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The OEFFA staff consists of an application reviewer, certification coordinators, and contracted inspectors. The staff reports to an executive director who is hired by the OEFFA Certification BOD. The BOD are not certified by OEFFA; therefore, no conflicts of interest occur. The current Certification Coordinators, Steve Sears and Sylvia Upp, are retiring in 2008, and OEFFA has hired qualified personnel to become the certification coordinators.

The OEFFA staff and contracted inspectors all are qualified and the current resumes, conflict of interests, evaluations, and training records are on file. OEFFA conducts training for inspectors on a yearly basis and the staff attends NOP training meetings on a regular basis. OEFFA had sent in all required information to the NOP at the designated dates and had just recently submitted the 2007 Annual Update to the NOP.

**FINDINGS**

Observations made, interviews conducted, and procedures and records reviewed verified that OEFFA is currently operating in compliance to the audit criteria except as noted in the non-compliances below. Nine non-compliances were identified during the audit. All past non-compliances from the previous on-site audit were verified for implementation and effectiveness and cleared.

**NP3126MA.NC1 (CIP) – Cleared**  
**NP3126MA.NC2 (CIP) – Cleared**  
**NP3126MA.NC3 (CIP) – Cleared**  
**NP3126MA.NC4 (CIP) – Cleared**  
**NP3126MA.NC5 (HP) – Cleared**  
**NP3126MA.NC6 (CIP) – Cleared**  
**NP3126MA.NC7 (CIP) – Cleared**  
**NP3126MA.NC8 (CIP) – Cleared**

**NP7033DDB.NC1** – NOP §205.504(b)(1) requires the certifying agent to submit a copy of the procedures to be used to evaluate certification applicants, make certification decisions, and issue certification certificates. *Currently OEFFA has a written procedure that requires a certification committee review and make recommendations to an OEFFA staff member to make the final certification decision. OEFFA has submitted in the NOP 2007 Annual Update which changes the review by a certification committee to a certification panel that is the OEFFA staff and a decision checklist will be used to make the certification decision. However, the procedure did not identify who would comprise the certification panel, who would make the final decision, and has not been developed the decision checklist.*

**NP7033DDB.NC2** – NOP §205.642 states, "...The certifying agent shall provide each applicant with an estimate of the total cost of certification and an estimate of the annual cost of updating the certification." *OEFFA supplies the client with a fee schedule in which the client fills in the fees for the certification requested and sends in a payment to OEFFA. The clients are not being supplied with a cost estimate from OEFFA for either the initial or annual certification.*



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**NP7033DDB.NC3** – NOP §205.403(a)(1) states, “A certifying agent must conduct an initial on-site inspection of each production unit, facility, and site that produces or handles organic products and that is included in an operation for which certification is requested. An on-site inspection shall be conducted annually thereafter for each certified operation that produces or handles organic products...” *OEFFA has a Grower Group procedure which all entities are inspected the initial year and then new entities and 20% of approved growers are inspected the subsequent years. OEFFA has had one grower group in 2005 but in 2006 that grower group did not request re- certification and currently OEFFA does not have any grower groups certified. However the procedure is not in compliance to the NOP Rule.*

**NP7033DDB.NC4** – NOP §205.662(a)(3) & (b) states, “When an inspection, review, or investigation of a certified operation by a certifying agent... reveals any noncompliance with the Act or regulations in this part, a written notification of noncompliance shall be sent to the certified operation. Such notification shall provide: (3) The date by which the certified operation must rebut or correct each noncompliance and submit supporting documentation... (b) When a certified operation demonstrates that each noncompliance has been resolved, the certifying agent... shall send the certified operation a written notification of noncompliance resolution.” *OEFFA is not giving the client a date that the certified operation must rebut or correct each noncompliance. OEFFA is also not sending the written notification of noncompliance resolution to all clients based on the severity of the noncompliance. If OEFFA had determined that the non-compliance was of minor consequence, no written notice of resolution was given when the client submitted adequate resolution. A verbal acceptance was given.*

**NP7033DDB.NC5** – NOP §205.301(b) states, “A raw or processed agricultural product sold, labeled, or represented as ‘organic’ must contain (by weight or fluid volume, excluding water and salt) not less than 95 percent organically produced raw or processed agricultural products...”

- 1. OEFFA has certified one client as “Certified Maple Water” in which water is condensed from the maple syrup cooking process and bottled and labeled as Maple Water. The water is not flavored and therefore the water can’t be certified.*
- 2. OEFFA has a certified client in which the label states, “Feta Cheese from Certified Organic Milk” and from “100% Grass Fed Cows”. The ingredient statement states, “OEFFA Certified Milk, cheese cultures, plant enzymes.” OEFFA does not certify all the milk that is used in the cheese making process (company has two other suppliers). The OEFFA Certified Milk does not meet the requirement of the “certified by” statement. Also, the product profile shows the cheese is >95% organic material and the label implies that the product is “made with” organic ingredients. OEFFA is not certifying the 100% Grass fed cows for the other two clients that milk is received from.*

**NP7033DDB.NC6** – NOP §205.501(b)(2) states, “...That the certifying agent: does not require compliance with any production or handling practices other than those provided for in the Act and the regulations in this part as a condition...” *A review of the client files and observations made during the on-site inspections found that OEFFA is requiring additional conditions for certification, such as:*

- 1. Inspectors identifying a required 25 foot buffer zone;*
- 2. Inspector’s checklist and inspectors are implying that clients need to notify neighbors of organic farming and the need to post no-spray signs;*



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3. *Certifying agent requiring that processing/handling requirements develop quality control manuals and sanitation procedures including worker sanitation and training manuals as a condition of certification;*
4. *Requiring the client to perform water tests for coliforms and nitrates on pond or well water for drinking water for animals and requiring the client to pay. Also requiring the client to perform water tests for coliforms and nitrates on well water for washing fruits and vegetables;*
5. *Requiring a client that sells livestock feed to a dairy or other livestock producers to have a lot numbering system; and*
6. *OSP's for crop, livestock and handling operations have statements not in compliance to the NOP rules such as:*
  - a. *A diversified crop rotation is required;*
  - b. *NOP Rule requires a crop rotation plan that maximizes soil organic matter content;*
  - c. *Width of minimum buffer is dependent on certifying agent policy;*
  - d. *Water used for organic livestock must be potable and readily accessible;*
  - e. *NOP standards require that humane methods of handling be used for loading, unloading, holding and slaughter;*
  - f. *NOP standards require that all primary ingredients be certified organic unless not available; and*
  - g. *NOP Standards require attachment of a complete written description for schematic product flow chart.*

**NP7033DDB.NC7** – NOP §205.404(a) states, "...The certification may include requirements for the correction of minor noncompliances within a specified time period as a condition of continued certification." *OEFFA has approximately 412 certified clients. A review of 13 client files found that OEFFA did not issue non-compliances for:*

1. *An udder cream was being used that contained propylene glycol and was approved for use when it had an unapproved input.*
2. *How client protected waterways in order to avoid contamination by cows; bedding used for cows was not certified organic; and Teat dip called Iodine Udder line 55 not reviewed for approval.*
3. *One dairy client was not meeting the 80/20 rule as grain was not organic, corn and corn distillates were not verified as organic and transitional hay was used but not explained as to what year it was transitioned. The animals did not complete the 80/20. Calves with pneumonia were treated with antibiotics and no records were shown to show how the calves were removed from the program. The animals were not certified as organic; however, the ACA did not write any non-compliance against the livestock portion of the client's program. The client was issued a certificate for crops.*

**NP7033DDB.NC8** – NOP §205.402(a)(2) states, "Upon acceptance of an application for certification, a certifying agent must: Determine by a review of the application materials whether the applicant appears to comply or may be able to comply with the applicable requirements of subpart C of this part." It is the accredited certifying agent's (ACA) responsibility to verify that all ingredients and inputs utilized by an operation certified by that ACA are in compliance with the Final Rule and the National List. *Inspection reports and observations made during on-site inspections found that the inspectors are reviewing only the OMRI list or stating that they are "familiar" with the product and know it is approved. OEFFA was not*



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*able to produce any documentation that the final decision to certify a client's inputs was based on the NOP Rule and not the OMRI list.*

**NP7033DDB.NC9** – NOP §205.207(a,b) states, “A wild crop that is intended to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic must be harvested... A wild crop must be harvested in a manner that insures that such harvesting will not be destructive...” *Neither the OSP nor the inspector's checklist, issued by OEFFA, addressed these requirements and the basis for the decision to certify for wild crops could not be established. The certificate issued states either “Wild crafting,” “Woods,” or crop specific such as Cohash or Ginseng. One client file indicated that roots had been transplanted from a national forest to other ground to maintain the crop. This client was certified as wild crop when these would indicate a crop.*